



Legislative Bulletin.....June 23, 2003

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H.Res. 264—Expressing sympathy for the victims of the devastating earthquake that struck Algeria on May 21, 2003 (*Lantos*)

Order of Business: The resolution is scheduled for consideration on Monday, June 23rd, under a motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill.

Summary: H.Res. 264 resolves that the House:

- “(1) expresses its deepest sympathies to the people of Algeria and particularly to the families of the victims and the survivors for the tragic losses suffered as a result of the earthquake of May 21, 2003;
- “(2) expresses its support for the people and to the Government of Algeria as they continue their efforts to rebuild their cities and their lives;
- “(3) expresses support for humanitarian assistance provided by the United States Agency for International Development and other American and international relief organizations;
- “(4) recognizes the important role that is being played by the United States and the international community in providing assistance to alleviate the suffering of the people of Algeria; and
- “(5) encourages a continued commitment by the United States and other countries and international organizations to the rebuilding of the earthquake-affected areas in Algeria.”

Additional Background: According to the resolution, on May 21, 2003, an earthquake of a magnitude of 6.8 on the Richter scale struck northern Algeria, killing more than 2,260 people, injuring more than 10,000, and leaving more than 200,000 homeless

Committee Action: The resolution was considered by the Committee on International Relations on June 12 and reported by voice vote.

Cost to Taxpayers: The resolution authorizes no expenditure.

Does the Bill Create New Federal Programs or Rules?: No.

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H.Res. 177 — Commending the people of the Republic of Kenya for conducting free and fair elections, for the peaceful and orderly transfer of power in their government, and for the continued success of democracy in their nation since that transition (Green of Wisconsin)

Order of Business: The resolution is scheduled to be considered on Monday, June 23, 2003, under a motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill.

Summary: The resolution has seven findings regarding the December 27, 2002, Republic of Kenya presidential, parliamentary, and local elections; and resolves that the House of Representatives—

- “commends the people of the Republic of Kenya for conducting free and fair elections, and the Government of Kenya for its successful completion of a peaceful and orderly transition of power;
- “expresses its desire to see this new democracy in Kenya continue to thrive, as it has in the months following the 2002 elections;
- “urges other African countries to look to Kenya as an example of a working democracy in action and to follow the example set by the people of Kenya during this recent election process;
- “reaffirms the friendship that exists between the people of the United States and people of Kenya, as two nations bound together by the shared values of democracy;
- “offers its commitment to working to ensure democracy is able to grow and flourish as Kenya moves into the challenging future that lies ahead; and
- “commends President Mwai Kibaki and his government for their commitment and concrete steps taken, since taking office—to strengthen democracy, human rights and the rule of law; to combat corruption; to provide free and universal primary education; to fight against HIV/AIDS; and to support the United States in the war on terrorism.”

Committee Action: The bill was introduced on April 3, 2003 and was referred to the House Committee on International Relations, which reported it favorably by unanimous consent on June 12.

Cost to Taxpayers: The resolution has no cost.

Does the Bill Create New Federal Programs or Rules?: No.

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H.Con.Res. 209 — Commending the signing of the United States-Adriatic Charter, a charter of partnership among the United States, Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia (*Engel*)

Order of Business: The resolution is scheduled to be considered on Monday, June 23, 2003, under a motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill.

Summary: The resolution has seven findings regarding Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia and the United States-Adriatic Charter, which was signed on May 2, 2003. According to the resolution, the Charter affirms these countries' commitment "to the values and principles" of NATO and to joining the Alliance at the earliest possible time.

The joint resolution resolves that Congress:

- "strongly supports the United States-Adriatic Charter and commends Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia for their continued efforts to become full-fledged members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union;
- "urges NATO to invite Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia to join NATO as soon as these countries demonstrate the ability to assume the responsibilities of NATO membership;
- "welcomes and supports the aspirations of Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia to join the European Union at the earliest opportunity;
- "recognizes that Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia are making important strides to bring their economic, military, and political institutions into conformance with the standards of NATO and other Euro-Atlantic institutions; and
- "commends Secretary of State Powell for his personal support of the Adriatic Charter."

Additional Information: While Secretary Powell's remarks on the Charter may be found here: <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2003/20158.htm>, the text of the Charter is not posted on the State Department's website and could not be located as of press time.

Committee Action: The resolution was introduced on June 5, 2003 and referred to the House Committee on International Relations, which reported it favorably by unanimous consent on June 12.

Cost to Taxpayers: The resolution has no cost.

Does the Bill Create New Federal Programs or Rules?: No.

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H.R. 2465—Family Farmer Bankruptcy Relief Act (Sensenbrenner)

Order of Business: The bill is scheduled to be considered on Monday, June 23rd, under a motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill.

Summary: H.R. 2465 would renew for six months the family farmer bankruptcy protection, known as Chapter 12 (Public Law 105-277). Chapter 12 allows bankrupt family farmers to restructure their debts without losing their land. The bill would extend Chapter 12 through January 1, 2004, six months later than its current expiration date of July 1, 2003. A permanent Chapter 12 extension is contained in H.R. 975, the bankruptcy reform legislation that the House passed on March 19, 2003 (by a vote of 315-113-1), but that the Senate has not yet considered.

Additional Background: H.R. 5472 (Public Law 107-377), which passed the House by voice vote on October 1, 2002, extended family farmer bankruptcy protection through July 1, 2003.

Committee Action: H.R. 2465 was referred to the House Judiciary Committee on June 12, 2003, but was not considered by the Committee.

Administration Position: Although no Statement of Administration Policy (SAP) is available for H.R. 2465, the SAP for H.R. 975, which contains a *permanent* extension of family farmer bankruptcy protection, was supportive:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/legislative/sap/108-1/hr975sap-h.pdf>

Cost to Taxpayers: A CBO cost estimate for H.R. 975 did not report any affect on federal spending or receipts by an extension of family farmer bankruptcy protection.

Does the Bill Create New Federal Programs or Rules?: H.R. 2465 would temporarily extend through January 1, 2004, a current-law bankruptcy provision set to expire on July 1st.

Constitutional Authority: Though a committee report citing constitutional authority is unavailable, Article I, Section 8, Clause 4 of the Constitution gives Congress the power “to establish...uniform Laws on the subject of Bankruptcies throughout the United States.”

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H.R. 1460—Veterans Entrepreneurship Act (Renzi)

Order of Business: The bill is scheduled to be considered on Monday, June 23rd, under a motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill.

Summary: H.R. 1460 would allow veterans, disabled veterans, dependent spouses and children of certain disabled or deceased veterans, and members of the National Guard and Reserves to use Veterans' Affairs (VA) education benefits to enroll in non-degree, non-credit entrepreneurship courses offered by a Small Business Development Center (SBDC) and the National Veterans Business Development Corporation.

The bill would also:

- give contracting officers in federal agencies the authority to create sole-source contracts for service-disabled, veteran-owned businesses of up to \$5 million for manufacturing contracts and \$3 million for non-manufacturing contracts;
- allow disabled Servicemembers to apply for VA's specially adapted housing grant (a grant to offset the cost of modifying a home to accommodate a veteran's disabilities) *before* being discharged from active duty;
- reinstate the vendee loan program, which VA administratively terminated on January 23, 2003 (when a purchaser agrees to buy a foreclosed VA home, VA offered to finance the sale by establishing a vendee loan to encourage the prompt sale of the home); and
- repeal the two-year limitation on accrued benefits so that a veteran's survivor may receive full benefits and not be penalized if the VA does not process claims in a timely manner.

Additional Background: The Small Business Administration (SBA) helps fund 1,000 SBDCs in the United States, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, and American Samoa. SBDCs are operated in partnership with colleges and universities or governmental entities.

Committee Action: On May 7, 2003, the Subcommittee on Benefits reported (by unanimous consent) the bill to the full Committee on Veterans' Affairs. On May 15, 2003, the full committee reported the bill favorably by voice vote.

Administration Position: On April 30, 2003, Leo S. MacKay, Jr., Ph.D., Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs, testified before the Benefits Subcommittee (in reference to the primary provision of the bill), that "While we support the goals of this provision, it is not included in the President's Budget, and an offset would have to be found." Dr. MacKay then offered mild support for the remainder of the bill.

Cost to Taxpayers: CBO estimates that H.R. 1460 would authorize appropriations of less than \$500,000 per year over the FY2004-2008 period and would yield a net **decrease** in mandatory spending of \$66 million in FY2004 and a total of \$177 million over the FY2004-2008 period.

Does the Bill Create New Federal Programs or Rules?: The bill would mostly widen the applications of current law.

Constitutional Authority: The Committee on Veterans' Affairs, in House Report, 108-142, cites constitutional authority in Article I, Section 8, Clause 1 (the congressional power to "provide for the common Defence and general Welfare of the United States").

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